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YOUR MONEY'S WORTH IN FABRICS:

A radio talk prepared by Miss Lois Holderbaum, Clothing Specialist, Agricultural Extension Service, State College of Washington, and delivered by Miss Jean Stewart during the Western Farm and Home Hour Wednesday, August 31, 1932, through Station KGO and eight other stations associated with the NBC-KGO network, Pacific Division, National Broadcasting Company.

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When you spend your dollar for fabrics or clothing, do you get a dollar's worth?

The shops are full of signs: "All prices reduced." "Dresses at a bargain." "Hats at new low prices." But, can you really tell a bargain or do you rely on the advice of the salesperson? There are many fabric tests that can be made at the counter and some of the simplest will prevent serious disappointment and trouble later.

For instance, have you ever dressed hurriedly to go somewhere, only to find that the dress you intended to wear had pulled out at the sleeves or across the back? Doesn't it give you a helpless feeling? Whom should we blame, the dressmaker or ourselves? Well, of course, the dressmaker should fit garments correctly but many clothes that are properly fitted do not give good service. Perhaps more attention should have been paid to the selection of the fabric. An easy test that may be made in any department store is this: Pull the fabric gently between the thumbs. If the threads pull out of place easily, you know it will pull at the seams, the sleeves, or wherever there is a strain.

Do you remember when we used to soak our gingham in salt water or vinegar and water to set the color? What faith we had in that ceremony! But such home remedies do no good. In reality it was a useless performance. Whether the colors stay or fade when a fabric is washed with reasonable care depends upon the dyes that were used and the way they were applied. If a fabric isn't fast color when it leaves the mill, it never will be. Many materials have the words "fast color" printed on the selvage. Others have a guarantee which the salesperson will explain to you. It always pays to ask about this.

Have you ever purchased a silk dress which went to pieces long before the season was over? Perhaps this was because it was improperly or too heavily weighted. Silk fibers cannot stand up long under the strain that is put on them by an excess of metallic weighting. Often the "feel" of the material will warn you that it is weighted. Such fabrics usually have a harsh texture. The more soft and supple the fabric the less likelihood there is of much weighting. The one simple test for metallic weighting is to burn a tiny piece from a seam or the hem of the dress. A weighted silk holds its shape just as paper does after it is burned. Unweighted silk rolls into a little ball as it burns.

Of course, we women are partly to blame for the prevalence of weighted silk on the markets today. We have demanded a heavy silk at a low price. The only way the manufacturer can do this is to put in weighting. When we begin  
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noticing the thread count, that is, how close the threads are together, and the firmness of the weave instead of how heavy the fabric is, we will begin to get better fabrics for our money. A soft, firmly woven, light weight silk will frequently outwear a heavy one.

And now a word about wool materials. Have you noticed that in the less expensive coats with a napped finish, the finish soon wears off leaving a thread-bare look? This is due to the fact that wool fabrics of poor grade may have a quantity of very short bits of wool pressed into the surface. Upon wearing, the surface finish quickly rubs off such a fabric leaving a flimsy, poorly constructed cloth beneath. To test such materials, rub the cloth rapidly between the fingers. A good fabric will show no change.

These are but a few simple tests for fabrics but if you will keep your eyes and ears open and your fingers trained when purchasing, you will come very near to getting a dollar's worth for every dollar you spend.